

and to jail and hold hostage an American citizen, who today is being held hostage in Cuba, Alan Gross. By the way, after they took him hostage, we implemented this policy.

So this policy is a reward for what? Here is my challenge to the administration and the State Department. I know you are not going to change your mind. I know you people in this people-to-people stuff. I know someone has sold you a bill of goods that this people-to-people travel is a good idea, it will further democracy and freedom in Cuba. I get that. You are not going to change your mind. But at least examine how this is being implemented, because this is a charade. This is an embarrassment. These people are getting licenses to conduct this outrageous tourism, which, quite frankly, borders on indoctrination of Americans by Castro government officials.

I hope we will continue to look at this, and that this administration, as part of its Western Hemispheric approach, will look at these trips for what they are. They are an outrage. They are grotesque. They are providing hard currency to a regime that oppresses its people, that jails people because they disagree with the government. It is wrong. This is not what we are about as a country. This cannot be what we defend. Even if you agree with this people-to-people theory and concept, you cannot justify how this program is being implemented, or these people who are getting licenses to conduct these kinds of trips.

I hope in our conversations with the State Department about their appointments in the Western Hemisphere, and specifically the nomination of Roberta Jacobsen, we will use that as an opportunity to examine how these programs are being implemented. Because, quite frankly, they are an outrage.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 257, H.R. 3630.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 257, H.R. 3630, an act to provide incentives for the creation of jobs, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to calendar No. 257, H.R. 3630, an Act to provide incentives for the creation of jobs, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Max Baucus, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Jeff Bingaman, Richard J. Durbin, Patrick J. Leahy, Joseph I. Lieberman, Mark L. Pryor, Christopher A. Coons, Patty Murray, Tom Udall, Charles E. Schumer, Mark Begich, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Kent Conrad, Thomas R. Carper.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed to a period of morning business and that Senators be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REFORM AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of H.R. 2867, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reform and Reauthorization Act of 2011.

Many of our Nation's Founders fled religious persecution, and they placed great importance on religious freedom. George Washington summed up the prevailing view when he said, "In this land of equal liberty, it is our boast, that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the laws."

In 1791, the first amendment of the Constitution was ratified, enshrining freedom of religion as the "First Freedom" of all Americans. The first amendment became an inspiration to people all over the world who struggle to throw off the yoke of religious persecution.

Throughout our history, the United States has sought to protect and promote the fundamental human right of religious freedom at home and around the world. Just last week, on December 10, we celebrated Human Rights Day, the 63rd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After World War II, under Eleanor Roosevelt's leadership, the United States spearheaded the ratification of the Universal Declaration, which recognized freedom of religion as a fundamental right of all people.

As the founding chairman of the first-ever Senate subcommittee focused on human rights, I am deeply committed to protecting religious freedom, and I strongly support the mission of the U.S. Commission on International

Religious Freedom. However, as I will outline below, I am concerned that USCIRF has gone astray in recent years. Therefore, I offered an amendment to H.R. 2867, the USCIRF Reauthorization Act, including good-government reforms like term limits for Commissioners, a prohibition on employee discrimination, and a requirement that Commissioners follow Federal travel regulations. My amendment also included changes to H.R. 2867 that will make USCIRF stronger, extending its reauthorization from 2 to 3 years and increasing the number of Commissioners from five to nine. The Durbin amendment will allow the USCIRF to more effectively pursue its mission.

On Monday, the Senate adopted my amendment and passed the USCIRF reauthorization bill on a unanimous vote. The bill is now awaiting consideration in the House of Representatives. USCIRF's current authorization is scheduled to expire tomorrow, December 16, so I urge my colleagues in the House to quickly take up and pass H.R. 2867.

I would like to take a moment to outline the provisions of the amendment that I offered to H.R. 2867.

Although the plain language of USCIRF's authorizing statute limits Commissioners to two, 2-year terms, for a total of 4 years of service, this term limit has never been observed. In fact, several Commissioners have served more than 10 years. The members of many governmental boards and commissions are term limited, and USCIRF would be well served by the new ideas and fresh perspective that new Commissioners would bring.

The House-passed version of H.R. 2867 includes a provision that limits Commissioners to serving two consecutive terms. However, the bill creates two new exceptions to the term limit provision in USCIRF's existing authorization. First, the bill would allow a Commissioner to serve an unlimited number of nonconsecutive terms. Second, the bill would allow each current Commissioner to complete his or her current term and then serve one additional term, regardless of how long the Commissioner has served. As a result, Commissioners who have already served more than 10 years would be permitted to serve an additional full term and unlimited nonconsecutive terms.

These loopholes are a step backwards from existing law and undercut the purpose of a term limit, which is to make sure that new voices from a range of viewpoints and faiths are rotated into the Commission periodically to collaborate in strengthening and shaping the Commission's mandate. In keeping with this spirit, my amendment includes in H.R. 2867 a firm term limit of two, 2-year terms—4 years total—with no grandfathering of current Commissioners.

USCIRF has taken the position that its employees do not enjoy the same antidiscrimination protections as all